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of the Foreign Office, partly of the Board of Trade and partly of the Overseas itself.

Many interested American businessmen and officials believe that a separate Bureau or Department of Foreign Commerce, consolidating the present Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce and its commercial attachés and trade commissioners with the foreign trade work now being performed in the State Department, with

joint control by the head of the separate Bureau or Department and the Commerce Department and the State Department, offers the biggest chance for improvement and coördination of our own governmental foreign trade work. Mr. Harding, in a speech at Louisville, has indicated that he is considering this subject. It will undoubtedly come up for a hearing in this country, and probably in the not distant future.

The Foreign Trade Work of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States

By CHAUNCEY DEPEW SNOW

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AS foreign trade matters have assumed more importance in the course of business in individual business concerns in the United States, they have naturally occupied to a growing extent the attention of the chambers of commerce and national and sectional industrial and trade associations. This development has been reflected in the activities of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, which is a national headquarters for the chambers of commerce and most of the trade associations, as well as having an individual and associate membership itself, consisting of thousands of business men and business houses. From the time of its organization, in 1912, the National Chamber has continuously dealt with important questions in the growth and promotion of the foreign trade of the United States. This was contemplated in its organization purposes and has been noticeable from the outset in the resolutions and discussions in annual and special conventions and in the referenda by which the Chamber endeavors to reflect the concentration of business opinion on vital

national questions in the United States. The opening of a Foreign Commerce Department in the National Chamber in 1920 did not mark the taking up of a new activity but simply the recognition of foreign trade as one of the outstanding sides of American business presenting national problems. Adequate machinery was set up within the Chamber to assure proper attention to foreign trade matters arising in the regular course of the organization's work.

In the membership of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States are found such organizations as the American Manufacturers' Export Association, the Philadelphia Commercial Museum, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Exporters' and Importers' Association, the Export and Import Board of Trade of Baltimore, and the Foreign Trade Club of San Francisco, all of which are either exclusively or to a very large extent concerned with the work of foreign-trade promotion. The membership also includes such chambers of commerce and similar organizations as the

New York Merchants' Association, the Chicago Association of Commerce, the New Orleans Association of Commerce, the Detroit Board of Commerce and the San Francisco, St. Louis, Seattle, Portland, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles and Boston Chambers of Commerce, to mention only a few of the most prominent local organizations maintaining definite and organized foreign trade activities.

Another important element in the membership of the National Chamber, from a foreign trade standpoint, is the American Chambers of Commerce in London, Paris, Milan and Naples, Brussels, Barcelona, Constantinople, Mexico City and Tampico, Buenos Aires, Havana, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Shanghai, Peking and Tientsin. Further, national industrial and trade associations which have developed definite foreign trade activities, such as the Tanners' Council, the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce, the National Implement and Vehicle Association, the American Paper and Pulp Association and the Music Industries Chamber of Commerce, to mention only a few, are active organization members in the National Chamber. Every one of the organizations coming within these various classes has foreign trade matters, possibly in the shape of declarations or resolutions, possibly practical problems coming up in the run of business, which are taken up with the national organization in Washington. Foreign trade interests are recognized specifically in the appointment of two members of the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Obviously, this character of organization membership and representation in the councils and work of the Chamber assures a pretty broad field of foreign trade endeavor, to say nothing about the problems and

inquiries presented by the business concerns which make up the individual and associate membership.

The broader activities of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States on foreign trade lines are numerous. It has taken part in building up the foreign trade promotion service of the government. At the first annual meeting the needs of improvement of the American consular service were taken up, and in 1913 a referendum gave the support of the organization membership to the development of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. In 1915 another referendum furthered the extension of the work of that Bureau and the improvement of the consular service on certain specific lines. The subject which later became embodied in the Webb-Pomerene Law was urged by the Chamber. The questions relating to the American merchant marine are another example of topics of nationwide interest bearing on American foreign trade on which the membership of the Chamber has gone on record and pressed toward constructive action.

In two of its national conventions, the organization has had special foreign trade meetings. It took the initiative in 1919 in inviting delegations of business men from Great Britain, France, Italy and Belgium to a conference at Atlantic City which led the way to the formation of the International Chamber of Commerce in 1920, and helped to clarify and point the way on some of the most clouded issues in connection with international financial transactions following the war. The Chamber of Commerce of the United States is the national organization in this country which has conducted the organization work of the International Chamber. Arbitration of commercial disputes between business men in the United States and buyers or sellers in foreign countries is

another line of foreign trade activity on which the Chamber of Commerce of the United States has made considerable progress. Following the first Pan-American Financial Conference, arrangements for the arbitration of commercial disputes between business houses in the United States and in Argentina were worked out with the *Bolsa de Comercio* in Buenos Aires. The agreement became effective in April, 1916, and some of the more serious commercial disputes have been settled under it. Similar agreements for arbitration have been negotiated with commercial organizations in some of the other Latin-American countries and further agreements are now being negotiated. The Chamber has also given its good offices in clearing up misunderstandings and bringing about satisfactory settlements in many commercial disputes between Americans and foreigners before the matters involved came up formally for arbitration. Increasing contacts with trade bodies in foreign countries are being made from year to year.

The Chamber is working to build up a solid appreciation of the importance of foreign trade, in every part of the United States, in which it is meeting with the coöperation of its organization members. Foreign trade matters are brought to the attention of the entire membership through regular publications: *The Nation's Business* has a distinct foreign trade slant, the Legislative Bulletin covers federal legislation touching on foreign trade and the General Bulletin carries a record of important government publications, regulations and orders affecting foreign business. The Foreign Commerce Department Committee of the Chamber, consisting of three members of the Board of Directors and nine other business men from various parts of the country, each directly interested

in some line of foreign business, meets every two months and recommends to the Board of Directors action on the most important questions that have arisen in the Department. A phase of the general work of promoting interest and increasing the spread of foreign trade education and publicity is the contact with the Department of Commerce and the Department of State. The Chamber arranges with its member organizations for the visit of returning government officials from abroad and foreign visitors, in delegations and singly,—a strong point in developing interest and spreading information.

The Chamber is especially interested in the increase and betterment of the facilities for foreign trade, such as the postal service, the cable and radio services, shipping facilities, marine and other insurance, banking and all the services of foreign trade information,—credit reports, reports on business conditions, trade opportunities, laws and rules and regulations in foreign countries which are pertinent to the business interests of the United States. The support given to the so-called McHugh Plan for a foreign financing corporation under the Edge Act, to operate on a large scale of long-term credit transactions in the foreign trade, as sponsored by the American Bankers' Association, is one concrete example of the Chamber's activity in connection with such matters. The Board of Directors of the Chamber, on a report by a special committee, recommended that the McHugh Plan be brought before all the members of the Chamber for their sympathetic consideration. In advance of the organization meeting in Chicago, a circular, with a covering letter giving all pertinent facts in regard to the plan, was sent to each member-receiving service from the Chamber. Another example of this sort of work for better facilities is the Foreign Com-

merce Department's action in bringing to the attention of all organization members the importance of the new statistical classification of exports and imports and the need of added appropriation in order to enable the new schedules to be made effective. Participation in the preliminary conferences in the Department of State with regard to the International Communications Conference is another instance of the same sort of work. The Department keeps in touch with all government offices dealing with foreign trade matters, as it does with all the trade organizations with foreign departments.

The Foreign Commerce Department of the Chamber handles a considerable volume of correspondence on foreign trade subjects, particularly on topics that come under the heading of "problems." Members of the staff are familiar with export and import practices, statistics and the literature of foreign commerce, and endeavor to keep thoroughly posted as to new developments which will help the members to solve their problems. Perhaps the most useful service function to an inquiring individual or associate member is providing information as to sources from which members may obtain service and assistance in the various branches of foreign trade. "Helping the members to help themselves" was the key-note of the first pamphlet issued by the Department, bearing the title *Promoting Foreign Trade*, with the sub-title, *With Particular Reference to the Work of Chambers of Commerce*.

The Foreign Commerce Department is proceeding on the theory of not attempting to duplicate the foreign trade work that is being done by the government offices, and other recognized trade information agencies whose services are readily available. The local chamber of commerce in a manufacturing and trading community is one of the

most useful centers of foreign trade information for current and frequent reference and the National Chamber makes a special point of helping the local organizations to render the best possible foreign trade service. Besides commercial and trade associations, there are banks, trade papers, freight forwarders, railroads, shipping companies and other sources of foreign trade information readily accessible to the average exporter, and the more familiar he is with their functions and the more familiar they are with the primary sources of foreign trade information and with the needs of the exporter, the better the service all around.

The National Chamber does answer direct foreign trade inquiries and endeavors to give its members the information which they request. At the same time, it makes a point of indicating to the inquiring member the best original sources of information on the topics involved and thus continuously carries on a line of educational work. Questions covered include foreign financing, credits, ocean transportation, freight forwarding, marine and pilferage insurance, trade mark registration, foreign patent requirements and other foreign laws, export packing, postal facilities, foreign consular requirements, tariff rates, translations, advertising and trade lists. No attempt is made to build up a staff service on each of these lines which would duplicate work being admirably done by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Manufacturers' Export Association, the Philadelphia Commercial Museum, the great credit-reporting agencies, the banks, etc. The important thing is that the inquiring member shall know the best specialized agencies in the field of his inquiry.

The biggest work of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States in the foreign trade field is unquestionably in the lines of developing solid sentiment for and understanding of the significance of foreign trade; contributing to the establishment, adoption and prosecution of sound national policies on foreign trade; and working for a better national equipment for the conduct of foreign business. Improving the facilities for foreign trade information work by the member organizations of the

National Chamber is one of its helpful functions. Through its publications, the Chamber itself spreads a great deal of vital information regarding foreign trade legislation, literature and topics of particular interest at a given time. It performs a certain amount of definite and specific service work with its individual and associate members. It aims at helping to solve acute problems and encouraging the development of the best standards of practice in American foreign trade.

The National Foreign Trade Council

By O. K. DAVIS

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IN the early part of 1914, when the United States was undergoing one of those periodical depressions characterized by decreasing consumption, the leading business men of the country realized very forcibly that the manufacturing industries of the country had reached a point where more could be produced than could be consumed in the domestic market. The need for foreign markets became very real, very evident. Yet the United States was in no condition to expand its foreign trade. The majority of our manufacturers were frankly unsympathetic toward the development of foreign fields. The government, too, was interested chiefly in domestic problems. The American exporter was faced by an almost total lack of American tonnage, by an under-equipped and poorly-housed government trade service, and by commercial treaties of an uncertain nature.

Before there could be any real expansion of American foreign trade under such conditions, two things were necessary: the country at large had to be educated to the need for foreign trade

to insure domestic prosperity; and means had to be found of removing the legislative and commercial obstacles. No one of the factors concerned in the development of foreign trade could by itself secure the ear of the people and of the government. The situation required combined action of an impressive nature.

To bring about this coöperation and to provide a body whose deliberations would attract the necessary attention, a meeting was called at Washington in May, 1914, by the American Manufacturers' Export Association, the American Asiatic Association, and the Pan-American Society of the United States. There assembled some four hundred men who were the leaders in manufacturing, merchandising, agriculture, banking and transportation. They came from all parts of the country, and represented the small concerns as well as the large. This gathering received the support of the Secretaries of Commerce and State, and the delegates were received by the President. All aspects of the foreign trade situation were considered, and the final